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DISASTER RISK REDUCTION

New Project Intends to Promote Communities of Practice

USAID/OFDA has entered a five-year cooperative agreement with Florida International University (FIU) in Miami to stimulate new disaster risk reduction (DRR) activities and strengthen existing programs in Latin America and the Caribbean.

The planned \$4.5 million project will provide an opportunity for key actors and stakeholders, including governmental, academic, and non-governmental groups, to come together in efforts to address vulnerabilities in the region. Among other objectives, the project will promote and strengthen a dozen "communities of practice" made up of DRR "thinkers" and "agents of change."

Spearheading the project are long-time USAID/OFDA collaborators Richard S. Olson, a professor at FIU, and Juan Pablo Sarmiento, former technical director of USAID/OFDA's Regional Disaster Assistance Program implemented by the International Resources Group.

Commenting on the need for additional disaster risk reduction projects/initiatives, Olsen said, "there is a general recognition that losses due to disasters are mounting, and response alone cannot meet the challenges. We must address the region's vulnerabilities. If disaster response is playing defense, this project is a real chance



Photo courtesy of Juan Pablo Sarmiento

The project aims to strengthen "communities of practice" such as the one at left, made up of experts in urban and rural planning, architecture, environment, and risk management.

to play offense for a change."

The new project, entitled "Disaster Risk Reduction in the Americas: Conceptualizing, Identifying, Analyzing, Stimulating, and Strengthening Transferable DRR Models," will expand the underlying concepts of the Paul C. Bell, Jr., Risk Management Initiative, a joint endeavor between USAID/OFDA and FIU that began in early 2006 to consolidate and expand risk management programs at the region's institutions of higher education.

The initiative honors the contributions of Paul C. Bell, Jr., an expert in risk management who helped establish the USAID/OFDA regional office in Costa Rica in the mid-1980s,

serving as its senior regional advisor until he passed away in 2003.

"This DRR project is based on the capacity, creativity, commitment, and passion of key people who have contributed to the improvement of disaster risk reduction and those who have the potential to do it," Sarmiento explained.

Olson, who like Sarmiento worked with Bell on different initiatives through the years, said he believes the project will allow FIU to help ensure USAID/OFDA maintains its leadership role in the design and implementation of DRR activities in Latin America and the Caribbean.

DISASTER RISK REDUCTION

Disaster Management Alliance Extended



Photo courtesy of PADF

Residents of La Bomba, in San Manuel, Honduras, help inaugurate a community water tank sponsored by USAID, PADF and Grupo Alcon/Cargill through the Disaster Management Alliance.

USAID/OFDA has provided more than \$580,000 to the Pan American Development Foundation (PADF) to support the next phase of the Disaster Management Alliance, a partnership with private sector enterprises to help communities in Central America, Colombia, and the Caribbean prepare for, and mitigate, the impacts of disasters.

The alliance is a partnership between USAID/OFDA, PADF, the Association of American Chambers of Commerce in Latin America, the Association of Contingency Planners, and 64 leading private-sector organizations.

Since it began in 2004, the alliance has delivered 43 high-impact community risk-reduction projects, benefitting more

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DISASTER RESPONSE

Humanitarian Aid Continues in Haiti

A USAID Disaster Assistance Response Team (USAID/DART) remains in Haiti coordinating the U.S. Government's \$31.6 million response to the humanitarian emergency caused by recent storms.

USAID/OFDA Director Ky Luu traveled to Haiti on September 30 to meet with staff from the U.S. Embassy, USAID, and U.S. Department of Defense. On October 1, Luu and additional USAID staff members traveled to Gonaïves to meet with international donors and implementing partners responding to the emergency in Haiti. The team also visited the city's main hospital, where CHF International is conducting cleanup activities with USAID/OFDA funding.

Disaster Management Alliance

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than 292,000 people in 149 communities in Colombia, Costa Rica, Trinidad and Tobago, and more recently, in the Dominican Republic, El Salvador, Haiti, and Honduras. The alliance has also trained 535 community leaders and more than 1,900 government and private-sector professionals in risk reduction and mitigation.

PADF is facilitating the evolution and growth of alliances formed over the past four years. The successes and challenges of the program were recently reviewed at the Regional Integration Conference in El Salvador. USAID/OFDA regional advisors and consultants participated in the July 23-25 meeting, during which participants discussed lessons learned and challenges ahead.

The next phase of the alliance began this month with USAID/OFDA funding, and will facilitate the components needed for the alliance to become a regional reality that strengthens national capacities through partnerships for corporate mentoring, strategic investment planning, as well as access to information, contacts, training, corporate recruitment, and the alliance's educational materials and technical assistance. In essence, this phase will facilitate the development of a benchmarking methodology for private-sector involvement in disaster management and disaster risk reduction.

The intention is to guide national and regional development plans, as well as facilitate business and government investment in risk reduction. All partners will identify their role and contribution to these plans. PADF will help create the necessary tools to help the alliance's partners participate and benefit from this strategic planning process.

The collective and ongoing efforts of alliance members will contribute to saving lives and mitigating the economic and social impact of frequently recurring disasters.

Based on this model, USAID/OFDA decided to test its application in Asia, and is now planning further expansion into India and Indonesia. The USAID Global Development Alliance's Office of Development Partners will be contributing resources and global corporate partners.

DISASTER RISK REDUCTION

MOU with Bomberos Unidos Sin Fronteras

USAID/OFDA has signed a memorandum of understanding (MOU) with Spanish firefighter group Bomberos Unidos Sin Fronteras (BUSF) to collaborate on DRR activities of interest.

Tim Callaghan, USAID/OFDA senior regional advisor for Latin America and the Caribbean, and BUSF president Ángel García Lorite, from Spain, signed the agreement in late September at the annual meeting of the International Search and Rescue Advisory Group (INSARAG), Americas region, in Ecuador.

The MOU states that the two parties wish to cooperate with, assist, and complement each other's efforts in the area of risk management, particularly in the following areas: a) the establishment and development of work groups in specified disciplines; b) project execution; c) exchange of technical personnel, without assuming salary or labor-related responsibilities; and d) human resources training.

The MOU also states the parties may exchange publications, books, and technical and/or scientific information of common interest; and indicates that any documents or projects prepared as a result of the tasks outlined in the agreement will be considered the intellectual property of both BUSF and USAID/OFDA, in equal parts.

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COMING UP

International Firefighters Convention

USAID/OFDA disaster experts María Luisa Alfaro, Manuel Santana, and Pedro Soto are participating in the LII International Convention for Structural Firefighters from October 22-24, in Mexico. Alfaro will give a presentation on the Incident Command System, an organizational model that helps first responders collaborate more effectively during emergencies.



Photo courtesy of the Firefighter Corps of Ecuador

USAID/OFDA disaster expert María Luisa Alfaro will inform firefighters about the benefits of Incident Command System.

Presentation on INSARAG Americas Work

USAID/OFDA regional advisor Rene Carrillo will travel to New Zealand next month to present the work of the International Search and Rescue Advisory Group (INSARAG) Americas region to the INSARAG Asia and Pacific region. The meeting will take place from November 10-13.

USAID/OFDA/LAC Video Presentation

USAID/OFDA is producing a short video about the work of the regional office for Latin America and the Caribbean. The video will cover USAID/OFDA disaster response, preparedness and risk reduction work, and be available for viewing in early 2009.

DISASTER RISK REDUCTION



Photo courtesy of Manuel Ramírez, USAID/OFDA

USAID/OFDA education specialist Manuel Ramírez (left) participates in a conference to promote disaster risk reduction in the education sector.

Disaster Risk Reduction in Education

USAID/OFDA is guiding and supporting efforts to strengthen disaster risk reduction curricula within Latin America's education sector.

As part of this support, USAID/OFDA education specialist Manuel Ramírez is participating in the Andean Sub-regional Workshop on Education Curricula on Risk Reduction, from October 22-24 in Lima, Peru.

Participants will continue work that began at a meeting held in Lima last month. USAID/OFDA helped organize the meeting, which served to promote alliances among the region's governmental agencies for education and disaster management, the Organization of American States, U.N. organizations, and non-governmental organizations such as Save the Children. More than 30 people attended the meeting.

"The activity was a success, as shall become evident in the short-term," Ramírez said. "Different agencies that focus on education will join forces, resulting in a better use of resources dedicated to this important subject area."